

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

William Faulkner Home, Rowan Oak

AND/OR COMMON

William Faulkner Home, Rowan Oak

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

719 Garfield Avenue (Garfield becomes Old Taylor Road at Rowan Oak
gate)

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Oxford

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

CODE

028

COUNTY

Lafayette

CODE

071

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT**OWNERSHIP**☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS**☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE**☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO**PRESENT USE**☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☒ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☒ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

University of Mississippi

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

University (Oxford)

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of Clerk of the Chancery Court

STREET & NUMBER

Lafayette County Court House

CITY, TOWN

Oxford

STATE

Mississippi

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

William Faulkner's Rowan Oak stands on 31.31 acres of wooded land northwest of Garfield Avenue and Old Taylor Road (Garfield becomes Old Taylor at the Faulkner gate) on the southwestern edge of the city of Oxford, Mississippi. Although the property is bordered by fairly dense residential development (north and east) and by the campus of the University of Mississippi (west), Rowan Oak retains its original secluded setting (the name, chosen by Faulkner, is derived from the legend that Scottish peasants placed crosses of Rowan wood above their doorways to ward off evil spirits and create a place of peace and privacy for the inhabitants). The main access to Rowan Oak is a curving, cedar-lined driveway from Garfield Avenue. Formal gardens (part of them installed by Faulkner) lie to the south and east of the house; outbuildings and paddocks are located to the north and west.

The house at Rowan Oak was constructed c. 1840 by Col. Robert Shegog, an Irish planter, and, though badly deteriorated, was essentially unaltered when Faulkner purchased it in 1930. The two-story frame and clapboard building carried a hipped roof broken at either end (east and west) by interior brick chimneys. Windows were 6/6 double-hung sash with louvered blinds. The main entrance, at the center of the five-bay south elevation, was covered by a pedimented portico supported by paired square pillars. A second entrance on the east elevation was covered by a one-story porch topped by a balustraded deck. Since Faulkner was not able to pay for all the necessary repairs on the house, he did much of the work himself and hired technicians only as he required them. Within a short time after the purchase, the house was completely repainted and a new roof, water, electrical and central heating systems were installed.

Rowan Oak followed a center hall plan, with parlor, dining room, cross hall, pantry and kitchen on the east and the library (Faulkner's first study) and an open rear porch on the west. A quarter-turn stair led to the second floor, containing three bedrooms on the east, one bedroom on the west, and a balcony above the rear porch. During his first few years in the house, Faulkner replaced the wood floor of the porch with brick. In the early 1950's he raised the brick floor, enclosed the porch, and made the new room his study; the second floor balcony was also enclosed and became a sewing room. At a later date, Faulkner added a balustraded brick terrace at either side (east and west) of the front portico.

There are four outbuildings associated with the house, only one of them added by Faulkner. Immediately to the rear (north) of the house is the original cook's house and kitchen--a one-story brick building with gabled roof--constructed by Col. Shegog; Faulkner used it as a smokehouse. Further to the north is a frame and clapboard tenant house, a one-story gable-roofed structure with an open porch along the front (south) elevation; it is currently occupied by the son of Faulkner's tenants. To the west of the main house, on the opposite side of the driveway, stands the original barn, a one-story gable-roofed structure of hand-hewn logs. Beyond it to the southwest is a second wooden barn,

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1840, 1930-1962

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Col. Robert Shegog

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Most critics agree that William Faulkner is one of the major novelists of American literature. His Yoknapatawpha Series, according to critic Malcolm Cowley is "a labor of the imagination that has not been equalled in our time." For his accumulated work, Faulkner received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. Two subsequent volumes were awarded the Pulitzer Prize, A Fable in 1955 and The Reivers in 1963. Faulkner's books have been translated into 32 languages and the author himself has been the subject of more critical books and monographs than any other writer of his generation.

Faulkner's home at Oxford, Mississippi, is a two-story frame and clapboard building with Greek Revival detailing constructed c. 1840. The author purchased the house, which he named Rowan Oak, in 1930 and lived there until his death in 1962; there he wrote most of the novels and short stories on which his literary reputation rests. After Faulkner's death, Rowan Oak and its contents were first leased and then conveyed to the University of Mississippi by his daughter, Jill Faulkner Summers. Now in good condition and still virtually intact, the house is open to the public Monday through Friday from 10 to 12 and 2 to 4, Saturday from 10 to 12, and by appointment.

Historical Background

William Faulkner was born on September 25, 1897, in New Albany, Mississippi, and in 1901 moved with his family to Oxford, where his father first operated a livery stable and then became business manager for the University of Mississippi. Faulkner attended public school in Oxford but left in his senior year to clerk in his grandfather's bank. In 1918 he joined the Royal Canadian Flying Corps, but received his commission too late for overseas service in World War I. He returned to Oxford in 1919 and spent the next year as a special student at the University, where he wrote for the school paper and did illustrations for the annual.

In 1921 Faulkner obtained a position in a New York book store through a friend, but after several months returned to Oxford to become university postmaster. Within a year he found that work so distasteful that both he and the postal

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

see continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 31.31 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 267950 3804825
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 16 267900 3804500
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 16 267400 3804300

D 16 267675 3804850

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

see continuation sheet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by John D. McDermott, Historian, 2/15/68

ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE March 30, 1976

STREET & NUMBER 1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN Washington

STATE D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ____

STATE ____

LOCAL ____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE N/A National Historic Landmark

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 9/8/83

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

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one story with vertical siding, which Faulkner constructed so that his cattle and horses could be housed separately. Adjacent to the barns are the paddock and jumping course where Faulkner trained his own horses.

The University of Mississippi leased Rowan Oak immediately after Faulkner's death in 1962 and acquired title to it on the death of the author's widow in 1973. Maintained primarily as a museum but also used for seminars in literature, the house remains exactly as it was when Faulkner lived there; family furnishings are intact, as are the author's writing equipment and the working outline of A Fable (published in 1954), which he lettered on two walls of his study. The house is generally in good condition but some repair of sills will be necessary in the near future; new heating, air conditioning, and fire detection systems will be installed at the same time. The outbuildings are also in need of repair, but the grounds are well-maintained.

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inspector agreed that he should make a change. By that time Faulkner had already made his decision to be a writer. The New Republic had accepted one of his poems in 1919 and in December 1924, his first volume of poetry, The Marble Faun, had appeared. His friend and mentor Phil Stone, an Oxford lawyer, suggested that he go to Europe to obtain recognition as had Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, and early in 1925 Faulkner went to New Orleans, hoping to find a berth on a freighter. Since no openings were available, Faulkner decided to remain in that city and at once plunged into its active literary life. A local avant-garde literary magazine, the Double Dealer, took many of his offerings as did the Times-Picayune. In six weeks he wrote his first novel, Soldiers' Pay. The leader of the literary colony, Sherwood Anderson, befriended Faulkner and helped him secure a publisher for the manuscript. It appeared in print on February 25, 1926.

In June 1925, Faulkner went to New York and secured passage aboard a freighter bound for Milan, Italy. During the next few months he toured Italy and France on bicycle and on foot, returning to the United States in November. In 1926 he settled briefly in Pascagoula, Mississippi, to finish his second novel, Mosquitoes, which appeared in the spring of the following year, and then went back to Oxford, where he worked as a carpenter, painter, paper-hanger, and watchman.

Soldiers' Pay, a story of postwar disillusionment, and Mosquitoes, a "novel of ideas" dealing with a group of New Orleans artists, brought Faulkner little critical approval. For his next novel he turned to a subject with which he was more familiar. He later credited Sherwood Anderson with the remark that inspired him to begin his series of novels on the South. "You're a country boy," Anderson had told him. "All you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi." Sartoris, published in January, 1929, was the first of Faulkner's novels to deal with Yoknapatawpha County, the fictional area in northern Mississippi that corresponded in many ways to his own Lafayette County.

According to Faulkner, Yoknapatawpha County covers 2,400 square acres and has a population of 15,611. Of those 6,298 are white and 9,313 are Negroes. Faulkner identifies about 600 of the inhabitants by name. Roughly characters fall into four classes: the landed aristocracy, the country people, the new commercial class, and the Negroes. Jefferson (Oxford) is the county seat. Faulkner treats many themes in his Yoknapatawpha Chronicle. Among them are the decay and sterility of the old aristocracy, the crassness and

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amorality of the rising commercial class, the burden of guilt in race relations, the endurance and courage of the downtrodden Negro, and, in general, the incompatibility of nature and organized society. Novels and volumes of short stories in the Yoknapatawpha series are: Sartoris (1929), The Sound and the Fury (1929), As I Lay Dying (1930), Sanctuary (1931), Light in August (1932), Absalom, Absalom! (1936), The Unvanquished (1938), The Hamlet (1940), Go Down, Moses and Other Stories (1942), Intruder in the Dust (1948), Knight's Gambit (1949), Collected Stories (1950), Requiem for a Nun (1951), The Town (1957), The Mansion (1959), and The Reivers (1962).

Although Sartoris, The Sound and the Fury, and As I Lay Dying brought Faulkner greater critical attention, he did not become widely known until the publication of Sanctuary in 1931. A story of sexual perversion structured like a detective story, the book brought him immediate notoriety, and in 1932 a motion picture based on the novel ("The Story of Temple Drake") further publicized his name. Short stories that had previously been rejected began to bring high prices and during the remainder of the 30's and the early 40's Faulkner frequently went to Hollywood to work on screenplays, for which he was handsomely paid.

By 1946, however, Faulkner was very little read. All of his books were out of print, and few critics had given the bulk of his work careful study, due in part of his public reputation as a sensationalist and a supposed proponent of the "cult of cruelty." In the summer of that year, however, The Portable Faulkner appeared. Edited and introduced by Malcolm Cowley, it marked the beginning of a new era of Faulkner criticism and readership. Cowley stated that Faulkner had created a legend of the South in his Yoknapatawpha Series, which he described as "a labor of the imagination that has not been equalled in our time." It was a double labor, according to Cowley. First, Faulkner had invented a Mississippi County that was like a mythical kingdom but was complete and living in all its details. Second, he had made the story of Yoknapatawpha County stand as a parable of all Deep South. An important review of the book by Robert Penn Warren in the New Republic broadened the interpretation. "The legend is not merely a legend of the South," wrote Warren, "but also a legend of our general plight and problem." Most later critics agreed, and Faulkner's place in American literature was secure.

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After his rediscovery, honors came to Faulkner in abundance. He received the Nobel Prize in 1950 for his accumulated work. In 1951 he was made an Officer in the French Legion of Honor. In 1955 he received the Pulitzer Prize for A Fable, which ironically enough did not take place in Yoknapatawpha County and today is considered by many to be one of his lesser works. At the request of the State Department, he frequently traveled to other countries as a cultural representative of the United States. In 1957 he was appointed Writer in Residence at the University of Virginia and during his remaining years spent each spring semester on campus. The rest of each year was spent at Rowan Oak, his Oxford home, where he died of a heart attack on July 6, 1962. Faulkner had completed his last novel, The Reivers, shortly before his death; the following year it won him his second Pulitzer Prize.

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PAGE 1

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The boundaries of the national historic landmark designation for the William Faulkner Home, Rowan Oak, at Oxford, Mississippi, are those of two contiguous parcels of land totaling 31.31 acres, as conveyed by Jill Faulkner Summers to the University of Mississippi in a deed recorded on February 25, 1974, with the Clerk of the Chancery Court for Lafayette County, Mississippi (Book 288, Page 562), more particularly described as Lots 53, 54, 55, and 56 (Parcel I; 18.54 acres) and those portions of Lots 86, 87, 88, and 89 lying west of Old Taylor Road (Parcel II; 12.77 acres), as shown on the Official Map of the City of Oxford, Mississippi.